OUR FAITH

Published by The Unitarian Christian Fellowship

Purpose:--"*To diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure religion, which, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man.*"

VOL. 3 APRIL, 1949 No. 7

Prayer

O Thou, whose glory filleth all things! whose greatness we can never find, but whose presence we would always seek! whose excellency is more than we can know, yet all that we adore! from the confused voices of our life we turn to Thy silent presence: from our dark and bounded sky we issue forth into Thy pure and infinite light. O, come, Thou Holy Spirit, we beseech Thee! and even to our dull clay bring Thy sanctity and dwell. O spirit of grace, who withholdest Thy blessing from none! take from us the tediousness and anxiety of a selfish mind, the unfruitfulness of cold affections, the weakness of an inconstant will. Amen. (JAMES MARTINEAU)

I Believe in God

DONALD HARRINGTON
(Associate Minister, The Community Church, New York)

(Quoted from a recent sermon, "God and The Coming Economic Crisis")

I believe in God, from the point of view of logic, experience and faith. From the point of view of logic, it is simply inconceivable to me that such an orderly universe could exist as that which we see about us without there being behind it and within it a factor or character akin to intelligence. To look upon the seasons and the orderly procession of the stars and not to see the divine intelligence behind them is to me the supreme unreason. It reminds me of a story which I heard about Henry Ward Beecher, the great preacher of the last century, and Robert G. Ingersoll, the famous agnostic. Beecher, according to the story, had invited Ingersoll to dine with him at his home, and before dinner was showing him his library. There he took down to demonstrate to Ingersoll a marvellous little gadget that had been given to him some time before. It was a miniature, mechanical solar system, with the sun, every planet, and moons in exactly the proper position, beautifully wrought in bronze, and when wound each part would move in exactly the right relation to every other part, as in the larger system described by the astronomers. "What a magnificent piece of work," exclaimed Ingersoll, entranced, "Who made it?" "Nobody," replied Beecher blandly, with a twinkle in his eye. "It just happened."

Beyond the realm of logic, it has been my experience that God is a power that penetrates into every aspect of the universe. This is God's universe, every atom, every electron of it! God is the character of these universal processes which we see portrayed in sun and star, and in the soul of man and the rhythm of life, the Design behind the laws which govern matter and spirit, and the Force functioning in and through all the life processes. God permeates the life structure as does the leaven the dough of the bread, giving it its character, lift and quality of aliveness. Thus, there is no portion of life which can be successfully understood or carried on apart from the design and functional influence of the Living God. This, in turn, means that we men must constantly be concerned to know God's will for us in every area of the life experience, not only in the church, religion, home, personal experience, but also, and perhaps most especially, in our economic and business life where we have so decisive an influence upon the well-being and happiness of other human beings.

The Value of Jesus For This Age

CHARLES E. PARK
(Minister Emeritus, First Church, Boston)

(From First Church Bulletin)

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men." JOHN 1, 4.

You have hauled out the projector and put up the screen, and are showing the movies you took during the holidays. The children are delighted. Suddenly the screen is blank, and there is a cry from Johnny: "I've caught the picture in my hand." He has stuck his hand in front of the lens and there is the picture in his grimy little palm. At any point between the lens and the screen the picture exists as a pattern of differing light beams. No one can see it until it is materialized by some arresting surface, like the screen, or Johnny's hand. Plato's ideas, Truth, Beauty, Goodness, exist all around us like invisible pictures in a projector's beam; but no one can see them until some object or personality captures them and gives them visibility. We never see red itself, or bigness itself, or weight itself; we only see things that possess those qualities and are red or big or heavy. God exists all about us, a Pattern of love and power and purpose and truth. But our nearest approach to seeing God is when some personality captures one or another of His qualities and is loving or strong or purposeful or true. Professor Bunsen, on his death-bed, looked up to his wife and whispered: In thy face I see the Eternal. We are sometimes asked what value we find in Jesus for this age. We answer: In his face we see the Eternal. He captures and makes visible as many of the attributes of God as a man may. In him we see what life may be, and the vision becomes our light.

A Layman Speaks Out

JOHN E. VERNER
(Attorney, Member of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Atlanta, Ga.)

Allow me to express my wholehearted approval of the object and purpose of the U.C.F. as set out in the February and March issues of **Our Faith.** The common purpose of the agnostic, the atheist, and the humanist is to influence as many people as possible to embrace a Godless philosophy. They should get together and form their own groups and quit trying to infiltrate churches that are dedicated to God and the preaching of rational Christianity.

You don't really believe in God if you are willing to pay a man who calls himself your "minister" to attempt to undermine your brother's faith. It is one thing to accord to a humanist the right to have his say; it is another thing to uphold his hands while he says it and thereby place yourself in a false light in the community in which you live. In other words, there is a point beyond which toleration ends and acting as an accomplice begins.

There are those who take the position that we are a debating society in search of the truth, and that our doors must be wide open to the proponents of all isms, regardless of the brand. There must be no exclusion except self-exclusion, they say. Well, my own church is now recuperating, I hope, from an application of this doctrine. It was a dose of humanism that made us sick in the first place, but it was the round of un-Americanism which followed that really threw us into convulsions.

It is a beautiful thing to talk about finding "unity in diversity," but it is a wise thing to realize that violent differences will destroy unity. Theism and atheism will never work as a team, and, in my humble opinion, to call atheism humanism is simply to camouflage it.

Society and God

ROWLAND GRAY-SMITH
(Minister, New North Church, Hingham, Mass.)

Unitarian ministers were recently sent copies of a periodical which has the engaging title, "The Free Mind." It is the organ of a "rationalist," "free-thinking" group in Portland, Ore., not affiliated with the Unitarians, though it gave prominence to quotations from an Anniversary Week lecture. In it was an editorial which equated God with Society. Behold Society, it said; behold your enduring God!

The reader was left to formulate reasons to justify that equation. And there seem to be three ways in which our awareness of society is similar to our awareness of God.

First, society may be said to be in some way the source of an individual's being. His existence and physical and mental structure are derived from his membership in the larger human species. So society is felt as a transcendent reality. Secondly, society is the source of demands upon the individual. Society established morality and under the pressure of society the individual is faced with moral demands. Thirdly, society is the source of the individual's security. Our lives and fortunes are wrapped up in those of society. In important respects society is our comfort and succor.

As those may be the grounds on which society is equated with God, we may now point out their inadequacy.

First, it is only partially true to say that society is the source of the individual's existence. Society is not the whole of reality. Man's total environment includes Nature also. So the religious response to reality cannot be the same as the response to society alone, especially since the human realm came forth out of the natural and is in constant dependence upon it. So for the real source of your being you have to look beyond society. This fallacy of taking the part for the whole is repeated in a pamphlet promoting the new "Humanist Fellowship of Boston, Inc.," where we read: "Man has no one but himself and his fellow men upon whom to rely."

Secondly, it is only partially true to say that society is the reality that meets the soul with moral demands. Granted, there can be no morality without society, for morality has to be defined in terms of human relationships. But at the same time morality is more inward and more deeply rooted within the individual than the theory allows. When Peter said, "We must obey God rather than men," he was thinking especially of one who had done so and who had been crucified by men. Morality meets the individual soul with an authority and power greater than that invested in all society as such, and the morality of rare individuals is corrective of the morality of society.

Thirdly, it is only partially true to say that society is our succor and help. No doubt it is impossible to imagine yourself without the works of your species about you, in books and buildings, in industry and commerce. But if the individual is not to be deprived of his preciousness as an individual, and if he is to be assured of spiritual help in situations which owe their poignancy to their uniqueness for him, he will depend upon a source of succor more real and potent than society could ever be.

Fully Awakened Spirit

LESLIE T. PENNINGTON
(Minister, First Unitarian Church, Chicago, Ill.)

(From a recent calendar)

In his search for a soul for the man who is aware of the immediate present, Dr. Jung presents this man as one "who stands upon a peak, or at the very edge of the world, the abyss of the future before him, above him the heavens, and below him the whole of mankind with a history that disappears in primeval mists."

Configurations of living energy relate man to all these things which surround him, past, present and to come, configurations which may be brought to a burning focus in him. Within these configurations of living energy God is the creative, healing, transforming, redeeming, whole-producing Spirit.

It is childish to assume that this Spirit only came into the world with the awakening of human intelligence, or that it is dependent upon human intelligence for its existence, for even here within our human bodies, whose constitution we share with the first primitive man, beneath the threshold of human intelligence, its dynamic harmony of healing and creative forces is present to a degree which still baffles the keenest human intelligence. Mature love is only an extension of this dynamic harmony to human relationships. From this dynamic harmony of forces within the human body self-conscious intelligence itself emerged, revealing potentialities in the "unconscious" processes of nature fully as great as the highest reaches of conscious intelligence, and surely as yet unfathomed by it.

Prayer is the awakening of the human spirit, the sensitizing of the human spirit, to this Spirit within these configurations of living energy. "It requires the most inten-

sive and extensive consciousnesss, with a minimum of unconsciousness," gathering to a new focus and integration the living energies of these configurations in the conscious and in the vast reaches of the unconscious mind.

It is to this end that we pray in the full context of the immediate present, the teeming life and the complex issues of modern society, and that we consider a church above all other things a gathering of friends for prayer.

A Statement of Faith

(Drawn up by Professors Carl A. Norman and S. R. Beitler, of Ohio State University, and other citizens of Columbus, Ohio)

1. We believe that there is a universal Spirit in which we live and move and have our being, a Spirit that is greater than all, pervades all, and is in all.

2. We believe with Abraham Lincoln that men can feel the promptings of that spirit within themselves, and that a divine providence works through such promptings. We hold with Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and many others that the hand of Providence has been clearly recognizable in the history of this nation.

3. With Lincoln we feel we must believe that "right makes might, and that in that faith we must to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it." We believe also that the universe moves toward an ultimate goal of harmonization with its constituting Spirit and that our supreme duty is to contribute our share, in accordance with our gifts, to the attainment of that goal.

4. We believe in close harmony with Alfred North Whitehead that the whole creation comes to consciousness in us; that in, or through, us it senses its divine origin and longs to return to harmony with that origin, from which it somehow has been estranged. As the apostle Paul says: "For the creation is waiting with eager longing for the appearance of the sons of God, in the hope that the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage to decay and have the glorious freedom of the children of God." It is the duty of men to turn into a temple of God the planet on which they live.

Greek Humanism

(From Introduction to Modern Philosophy by Hugh Miller. Macmillan, 1947)

"The Greeks honored man, man as such, as he had never before been honored. They held that man is too dignified to be ruled by man, and that all government must therefore be government by law, to which all men without loss of dignity may be subject. This humanism appears in all their art, which is an adoration of the human personality in its bodily beauty and poise.

"But we should not suppose this Greek humanism to have implied, as does some contemporary humanism, a repudiation, implicit or explicit, of the religious foundations of being. All Greek literature, all truly Greek science, is repeated warning against the thought that human life can be humanly lived in neglect of religious sources, and that respect for man excludes religious faith. Most intellectual of all the ancient people, the Greeks were also the most deeply religious."

News of U. C. F.

Dr. Alexander St. Ivanyi, minister of the First Church, Jamaica Plain, Mass., delivered an inspiring address on "Why I am a Christian," at the supper meeting of the Unitarian Christian Fellowship held in Arlington Street Church, Boston, on February 28, with representatives from sixteen churches in attendance.

Following the address and discussion, a brief devotional service was conducted by Rev. Clayton Brooks Hale of Rockland, Mass.

This meeting was one of a succession planned during the winter by the affiliates of the U.C.F. in the Greater Boston area.

"OUR FAITH" is published monthly (from October to May) by The Unitarian Christian Fellowship, 27 Marlborough St., Boston 16, Mass. Sybil H. Holmes, Chairman; Rev. Paul H. Chapman, 33 Glen Green, Winchester, Mass., Secretary.

Editor: Rev. Harvey Swanson, 538 W. Chestnut St., Lancaster, Pa.

Subscription price: $1.00 per year, payable to the Treasurer, Mr. Joseph E. Coulter, 101 Tremont St., Boston 8, Mass.

Contributions toward the expenses of "Our Faith" are gladly welcomed from all friends.

Extra copies of "Our Faith" in quantity may be secured, for distribution in local parishes, and for literature tables, from the editor, or from King's Chapel House, 27 Marlborough St., Boston 16, Mass.

Articles suitable for publication in "Our Faith" are welcome from all who wish to use these columns to express Unitarian Christianity.